

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC COLLEGE**

Dukinfield, Tameside, SK16 5AR

LEA area: Tameside

Unique reference number: 106272

Headteacher: Martin Bourke

Lead inspector: Michael Miller

Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> October 2003

Inspection number: 259349

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18 (Years 7 to 13)
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	1024
School address:	Kenyon Avenue, Dukinfield, Tameside,
Postcode:	SK16 5AR.
Telephone number:	0161-3382120
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Thomas Murphy
Date of previous inspection:	18 <sup>th</sup> May 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

All Saints Catholic College is situated in Dukinfield, to the east of Manchester. It is a comprehensive, voluntary aided secondary school for pupils and students aged 11 to 18 (Years 7 to 13). It is about the same size as most other secondary schools. There are 1024 pupils on roll, including 98 sixth-form students. The sixth form is smaller than average. The school is now larger than at the time of the previous inspection and is currently over-subscribed. Because of its Roman Catholic denominational status, pupils and students travel from a wide geographical area to attend the school. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school in Year 7 is average. The attainment of students on entry to the sixth form is below average. Most pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils from other ethnic groups, or whose mother tongue is not, or is believed not to be, English is low. Employment and unemployment rates in the area are average. At 13 per cent, the proportion of pupils registered for free school meals is average overall, but slightly above average in the sixth form. Some 14 per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is below average. At 1 per cent, the proportion of pupils having full statements of special educational need is below average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17556	Michael Miller	Lead inspector	
14214	Gillian Smith	Lay inspector	
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English
23082	Graham Loach	Team inspector	Mathematics
32878	Steven Goldsmith	Team inspector	Science (Main school)
18854	Malcolm McGregor	Team inspector	Design and technology
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	Modern languages Special educational needs English as an additional language
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	Citizenship Personal social and health education
20119	Tony Bell	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music
1085	John Laver	Team inspector	History Physical education
15940	Norman Godfrey	Team inspector	Business education
31693	Tim Hanafin	Team inspector	Art and design
30215	Helen Feasey	Team inspector	Geography
16786	Selwyn Hodge	Team inspector	Science (Sixth form)

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC COLLEGE

#### OVERALL EVALUATION

The school's **effectiveness is satisfactory overall**. Standards, by Year 9, are improving steadily. **Teaching and learning are good** overall. Nevertheless, there are some significant weaknesses. The school's curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements. Consequently, there are some unsatisfactory elements in the school's governance and areas for improvement in its management. However, **the school provides satisfactory value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- There is a good commitment to raising standards, but the standards attained in GCSE examinations, particularly by middle- and higher-attaining pupils, are not yet high enough;
- The use of performance data by the school to set targets for individual pupils, and the evaluation of performance by some subject departments, are not yet sharp enough;
- There has been a good, steady improvement in standards by Year 9, helped by the school's implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy;
- Pupils' attitudes towards learning and their behaviour in lessons are good overall, and better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11;
- The good quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 enables pupils to achieve well, and particularly those pupils with special educational needs;
- Communications between some management levels, and with pupils, are not always effective;
- The governors and governing body committees perform their roles well and provide good support for the school, but they have not ensured all statutory requirements are met;
- The school's curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements in design and technology, modern foreign languages, information and communication technology (ICT) and in citizenship;
- The financial management of the school is very good.

**Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory overall**. Satisfactory progress has been made in raising boys' achievement in Years 7 to 9. However, progress by Year 11 remains a concern for the school, and continues to form part of its action planning. The use of assessment information by teachers to support pupils' learning is satisfactory overall. However, its use for setting targets for improvement is not yet sharp enough. Despite limited funding there has been good improvement of resources, particularly for ICT and in the learning resource centre. The statutory performance management of teachers is now in place, but statutory requirements relating to the curriculum have not been fully resolved.

#### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	D	C	C	D
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	A	C	C	

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.  
For Year 11, similar schools are those, whose pupils attained at the end of Year 9.*

**Achievement** in work and lessons seen in **Years 7 to 11 is good** overall, although satisfactory by Year 11 in national tests and examinations. **Standards of attainment overall are in line with the national average**. There are no major differences between the achievement of girls and boys, although by Year 9, boys attain slightly higher standards overall. Standards in literacy and numeracy are currently above average, and pupils' competency in ICT is average.

**Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good**. However, the number of fixed-period exclusions is very high. **Pupils' personal development is satisfactory** overall. Their moral development is good, but pupils' multicultural awareness is underdeveloped. **Attendance is good in Years 7 to 11**.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **good** overall because of the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement. In addition, pupils receive **good support, advice and guidance**. Nevertheless, the extent to which the school involves pupils in its life and work is an important area for improvement. **Arrangements to ensure pupils' care and welfare are satisfactory**. There are strengths in its pastoral arrangements, but there are some health and safety issues for the school. Although the school's curriculum generally meets the needs of its pupils, some statutory requirements are not met. Consequently, **the statutory curriculum provision is unsatisfactory overall**.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the **leadership and management of the school are satisfactory**. Leadership of the headteacher is firm and rooted in the Catholic ethos of the school with a sound vision for improvement, which is shared with governors. **Subject leadership is satisfactory overall** and characterised by the ability to build and manage effective teams. Governors are actively involved in the life of the school. **Financial management is very good**. The school does not fully comply with its statutory requirements and, therefore, **governance is unsatisfactory overall**.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents hold the school in high regard. This is because teaching is good and teachers expect their children to work hard. Consequently, parents consider the pupils make good progress. Some parents would like to see improvements in the information provided for them about their children's progress, and the various ways in which the school seeks parents' views. All pupils returning the questionnaire consider they are expected to work hard and do their best. The majority think All Saints is a good school, and feel trusted. However, half the pupils considered there was a problem with bullying or racial abuse, although inspectors found no significant evidence for any major problems related to these issues. Nevertheless, nearly a third of Year 10 and 11 pupils do not consider the school is interested in their views. Discussions with pupils showed that, although they have respect for the staff, teachers are sometimes seen as figures of authority rather than someone they can turn to if there is a problem.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Develop further its work to raise standards of attainment in examinations in Year 11;
- Raise the standards of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement in citizenship;
- Improve the use of performance data to set targets, which are more realistic for individual pupils;
- Improve systems for assessing the actual progress of pupils from one year to another;
- Improve systems of communication between the various levels of management within the school, and consultation processes between the school and its pupils and students;
- Continue the work started by the governors and senior management in helping heads of department to develop their role as subject leaders and managers;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure statutory requirements for the teaching of the National Curriculum are met throughout the school, including the requirements for the disapplication of pupils in Years 10 and 11 and the full provision for compulsory subjects in these year groups;
- Ensure the statutory requirements for reporting to parents are met, particularly in citizenship.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT ALL SAINTS CATHOLIC COLLEGE

## OVERALL EVALUATION

Whilst, because of its size, **the sixth form is not fully cost-effective, nevertheless, its overall effectiveness is satisfactory and it offers satisfactory value for money.** Some of the courses offered do not run every year because there are insufficient numbers of suitable applicants to make them cost effective. Overall, **achievement in Years 12 and 13 is good, and standards are average. The students' personal development is satisfactory** overall. Nevertheless, some aspects of the students' personal development are unsatisfactory. This principally involves ways of seeking their views and giving students greater opportunity for taking responsibility within the school as a whole. **Attendance is unsatisfactory in the sixth form.**

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good quality of teaching and learning, linked with teachers' good subject knowledge and the way in which they act as good role-models for the students;
- Teachers' understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses, which leads to good working relationships and the students' good attitudes towards their studies in lessons;
- The good quality of support, advice and guidance provided for sixth-form students, linked with the good quality of assessment of their work;
- The good governance of the sixth form and the good communication and shared understanding between the senior managers of the sixth form;
- Students are given insufficient opportunity to take responsibility within the school, or to be consulted about its life and work;
- Attendance overall in the sixth form is unsatisfactory;
- Links with other institutions in order to provide students with wider course choices, and additional curriculum enrichment and enhancement opportunities, are underdeveloped.

## **QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM**

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
English, languages and communication	Good. Teaching, learning and students' achievement in the subject are good. Standards of attainment are above average. This is because of the well-informed and challenging teaching.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Overall, teaching, learning and achievement are satisfactory and standards of attainment average. Some students started A-level courses with low levels of prior attainment and struggle to cope with the work. Nevertheless, students make satisfactory progress, but there are limited opportunities for independent learning. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They establish very good working relationships with students.
Science: Chemistry	Good. Teaching, learning and achievement are good and standards of attainment average. Students are keen to learn and, consequently, develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject well. The teachers' good subject knowledge supports well students' learning and progress.
Information and communication technology	Good. Overall, teaching, learning and achievement are good and attainment average. Retention rates on the course have been unsatisfactory in recent times. There have been significant improvements in accommodation and resources for the subject, which support students' learning well.
Humanities: Geography	Satisfactory. Teaching, learning and students' achievement are satisfactory. However, standards of attainment are below average. Students enjoy the course, particularly the opportunities for fieldwork. A shortage of lesson time restricts opportunities for extending students' learning. Some students do not show enough personal commitment to independent study.
Visual and performing arts and media: Art	Good. Teaching, learning and achievement are good and standards of attainment average. Students have very good attitudes towards the subject and their progress is well monitored through the assessment of their work.

Business Good. Teaching and learning are very good, as are students' attitudes to work. Consequently, students make very good progress and achieve well. Nevertheless, the lack of outside visits or visiting speakers limits learning.

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*The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth-form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.*

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

**Students receive overall good support, advice and guidance.** Students enjoy being members of the sixth form. Arrangements to ensure students' **care and welfare are satisfactory** overall.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

**Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory.** There is good communication between sixth-form managers and vocational leaders. There is a sound focus upon developing the provision of vocational courses to meet better the needs of students, who stay on in the sixth form. Careful financial management balances the need to sustain courses with the cost effectiveness of some small groups.

## **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students show sound levels of satisfaction overall with the sixth form. The majority enjoy being at school. They find the teaching challenging and their teachers helpful and accessible. Most students consider they get on well together as a community, and feel treated fairly and with respect. There was some significant concern about the quality of careers advice, but discussion with students, and other evidence, showed this had been fully resolved by the time of the inspection. Nevertheless, through the questionnaire, 40 per cent of students indicated the school did not seek or respond well enough to their views. Inspectors agree with the students in this, particularly as there is no sixth-form representation on the school council or, currently, any active alternative forum for the students.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

**Achievement<sup>1</sup>** in work and lessons seen in **Years 7 to 11 is good** overall, although satisfactory by Year 11 in national tests and examinations. **Standards of attainment<sup>2</sup> are in line with the national average. Achievement in Years 12 and 13 is good, and standards are average.**

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of attainment are improving steadily, particularly for pupils by the end of Year 9.
- The school is implementing the literacy strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy<sup>3</sup> well.
- The school's overall trend for improvement in GCSE examinations is rising steadily.
- The percentage of pupils gaining higher A\* and A passes at GCSE is not high enough.
- The school's systems for target setting and comparison of pupils' and students' progress against national averages are not sharp enough.
- Standards and achievement in citizenship are too low throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, but pupils, who are gifted or talented, make inconsistent progress across subjects.

#### **Commentary**

1. At the time of the inspection, no validated national data was available to compare All Saints' performance against other schools nationally for the teacher assessments, tests and public examinations held in 2003. Comparisons are, therefore, made with 2002, the latest year for which such validated information is available. However, at the time of the inspection, the Department for Education and Skills was publishing the first unvalidated data for the 2003 Year 9 national tests. Where possible, comparisons with this latest data are made in the report.
2. There are no major differences between the achievement of girls and boys, although by Year 9, boys attain slightly higher standards overall. From the work seen during the inspection, overall standards in literacy and numeracy are currently above average, and pupils' competency in information and communication technology (ICT) is average.

#### **Key Stage 3 (Pupils in Years 7 to 9)**

3. Standards of attainment in the 2002 national tests were average by Year 9. Nevertheless, when compared with the pupils' prior attainment<sup>4</sup> at the end of Year 6, they made good progress. The school's trend for improvement, since the previous inspection, has risen steadily in line with the national trend. However, in the past three years, it has been slightly above the national trend. This is because of the work undertaken by the school in the development of the pupils' literacy skills, as part of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy.

#### ***Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002 – validated data***

<sup>1</sup> Achievement refers to the progress pupils make in terms of where they started when they entered the school. Thus, good achievement does not necessarily mean that standards are above average, but that pupils do well and make better than expected progress.

<sup>2</sup> Attainment refers to the standards pupils achieve compared with national averages

<sup>3</sup> **The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. This National Strategy now affects all subjects. It started with English and mathematics in 2001 and now includes science, information and communication technology and teaching and learning in the foundation subjects, as well as ensuring that all subject departments contribute to the development of pupils' understanding and skills in literacy and numeracy. For more information please go to the Government's Department for Education and Skills web-site: [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3)**

<sup>4</sup> Prior attainment: this compares the standards reached by pupils at the end of a key stage in their education and involves an evaluation as to whether pupils attained better or worse than expected. Consequently, standards in tests and teacher assessments for pupils in Year 9 are compared with those in Year 6, the pupils' final year in primary school. Similarly, standards in GCSE examinations in Year 11 are compared with the pupils' performance at the end of Year 9.

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.4 (33.7)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	34.1 (32.8)	34.7 (34.4)
science	33.3 (33.2)	33.3 (33.1)

*There were 178 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

4. The unvalidated national data for 2003 shows the school's results as follows:-

**Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003 – unvalidated data**

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	38.4	33.3
mathematics	36.5	35.3
science	33.4	33.7

*There were 152 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

5. These unvalidated results indicate standards attained by pupils in Year 9 in 2003 in English were well above average, those in mathematics above, those for science average and overall above for all core subjects, including ICT. This represents an overall good improvement from 2002 to 2003. In the foundation subjects<sup>5</sup>, there was good improvement in history and geography, a significant decline in design and technology and a slight decline in physical education, but the maintenance of standards in other subjects.
6. In pupils' work and lessons seen during the inspection, achievement is good by Year 9 in English, ICT, art, geography, history, music and physical education. It is satisfactory in mathematics, science, design and technology and in modern foreign languages. Achievement is unsatisfactory in citizenship and standards below average. Standards of attainment are average in mathematics, science, design and technology, modern foreign languages and music. They are above average in English, ICT, art, geography, history and physical education.

**Key Stage 4 (Pupils in Years 10 and 11)**

7. GCSE results overall in 2002 were average when compared with all schools nationally. When compared with similar schools they were below average. However, on the basis of the pupils' prior attainment in Year 9, results were above average. This represents overall sound progress by the pupils concerned from Years 9 to 11. However, in most subjects, a lower than the national average percentage of pupils gain higher A\* or A grades. Nevertheless, the school does very well in encouraging its lower-attaining pupils to gain a pass grade. The school is concerned to secure further improvement for middle- and higher-attaining pupils, and this currently forms a central part of its thinking and action planning.
8. The school's trend for improvement has fallen below the national trend overall since the previous inspection. However, between 2000 and 2002, it started to rise and the trend in this period has been slightly better than that seen nationally. Nevertheless, the school has not met its targets for improvement. This is because its own system for target setting, and establishing the progress made by its pupils and students in a national, rather than purely in a school, context, is not yet a sharp enough tool. There is not always a common enough approach or understanding by some heads of department, and teachers, of the importance of target setting. The governors have considered buying into national schemes, which provide the expertise and analysis, but financial constraints have prevented this.

<sup>5</sup> The National Curriculum foundation subjects are: art; design and technology; geography; history; ICT; modern foreign languages; music and physical education.

**Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002**

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades	43 (46)	50 (48)
Percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining one or more A*-G grades	99 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.7 (35.9)	39.8 (39.0)

*There were 147 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

9. The work and lessons seen during the inspection show pupils' achievement by Year 11 is satisfactory in English, science, design and technology, and in physical education. It is good in mathematics, ICT, art, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music and in business education. Achievement is unsatisfactory in citizenship and standards below average. Standards of attainment are below average in design and technology. They are average in English, science, geography, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and in business education. Attainment is above average in mathematics, ICT, art and in history.

**Sixth form** (Students in Years 12 and 13)

10. Standards in the sixth form, on the basis of students' average points score<sup>6</sup> achieved in 2002, were average for males and females. Because the sixth form is small, the school's results have fluctuated significantly from year to year, depending upon the differing levels and span of attainment of students on entry in Year 12. Consequently, since the previous inspection, overall performance has varied, with good cause, from well below to well above the national average. Because it is the only Catholic sixth form in the local authority, the school provides an important facility for its community.
11. In the seven subjects inspected in depth during the inspection, achievement in work and lessons seen is satisfactory in mathematics and geography. It is good in English, chemistry, ICT, art and in business education. Standards of attainment are below average in geography. Attainment is average in mathematics, chemistry, ICT and in art. Standards are above average in English and in business education.

**Pupils with a special educational need**

12. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. They are generally well supported in lessons and make good progress. Where pupils are withdrawn for extra tuition, they achieve very well. Pupils identified as gifted or talented achieve satisfactorily. However, planning is not yet consistent across all subjects. There are very good opportunities for the gifted or talented in music, for example, but these are limited in science. There are currently no pupils at the school for whom English is not their first language or, who are at an early stage of language acquisition. One traveller pupil re-started at the school during inspection week, having been away since the spring. This pupil was being re-assessed and satisfactorily re-integrated into the school through the sound work of the learning support department.

<sup>6</sup> The average points score provides schools with a single statistic to compare the overall grades attained by their pupils with the grades attained by pupils in another school or the national average. By the end of Year 9, the level attained by each pupil, for example, in mathematics, is given a score. A Level 4 = 27 points, a Level 5 = 33 points and so on. Therefore, the average points score in mathematics is worked out by adding up all of the points based on the level attained by pupils and then dividing by the number of pupils who took the test. Therefore, a school whose average points score for mathematics at the end of the Year 9 national tests is greater than 33 is one whose pupils are performing above that expected for their age. GCSE grades are also awarded points, as are A-level grades, and these are calculated in the same way, although the number of points awarded for each grade is different. For example, GCSE A\* is worth 8 points, grade A 7 points, grade B 6 points and so on until grade G, which is worth 1 point.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

**Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils' personal development**, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the areas inspected, **is satisfactory. Attendance is good in Years 7 to 11, but unsatisfactory in the sixth form.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The number of fixed-period exclusions is very high.
- Students in the sixth form and pupils in Years 7 to 9 have good attitudes towards their work and behave well during lessons and at other times.
- The moral development of pupils and students is good.
- The school deals effectively with any incidents of bullying or harassment.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils and students to develop their independence and to use their initiative.
- The pupils' and students' understanding of life in a multicultural society is underdeveloped.
- Attendance in the main school is good, but unsatisfactory in the sixth form.

### **Commentary: Main school**

13. During lessons, most of the pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a positive attitude to learning. They respect their teachers, behave well and are keen to do their best. All members of staff insist on high standards of behaviour and the overwhelming majority of pupils conform to these expectations. Pupils' moral development is good. They clearly understand the principles of right and wrong and this contributes towards the school's calm and organised atmosphere. Day-to-day school life, however, is often very structured and there are relatively few opportunities for pupils to express themselves freely or to use their initiative. During lessons, teachers control lessons tightly and many pupils lack self-confidence when their teacher asks them to work independently. Pupils within the school are predominantly of white ethnic origin, and there are very few racist incidents. Although they have a good understanding of their own ethnicity and religion, pupils' awareness of other faiths and cultures is limited. No representatives of other faiths or cultures have been to the school in at least the last year and pupils do not visit any non-Catholic places of worship. This does not prepare them well for later life within a multicultural and ethnically diverse society. The school states its main provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is through religious education and the work of its Chaplaincy team, both of which were the subject of a separate Diocesan inspection.
14. There are good systems in place to ensure pupils with special educational needs make good progress, particularly where their individual education plan targets involve improvements in behaviour. Pupils, who are gifted or talented, show the same positive attitudes as the majority of other pupils.

### **Attendance**

15. Attendance is above the national average for pupils between Years 7 and 11, and in line with the national trend for improvement in recent years. For health and safety reasons, the school has generous criteria for recording attendance as pupils coming to school before the start of the final lesson in the morning are registered as having been present for the whole morning session. In addition, and on the advice of the local education authority, pupils visiting the doctor or dentist are counted as being present. Unexplained absences are followed up regularly. Punctuality is satisfactory overall. However, although many lessons start on time, there are frequent occasions when some pupils are several minutes late, partly because there is a one-way system in some corridors and no movement time is built into curriculum planning.

### ***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)***

Authorised absence	
School data:	7.2
National data:	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0.1
National data:	1.2

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

### Exclusions

16. A significant minority of pupils have more negative attitudes than their peers. Consequently, the number of fixed-period exclusions is exceptionally high when compared with other secondary schools. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are most likely to be excluded. The frequency with which teachers use this sanction has more than doubled over the last three years. As well as being formally excluded, pupils, who misbehave, may be sent home at the end of the school day with a letter to their parents. The school records such incidents. When these pupils return the next day, they must bring their parents so they can all meet with a senior teacher. Although pupils and parents share concerns over the standard of pupils' behaviour, they agree the school deals with cases of bullying and harassment effectively. Each case of potential exclusion is considered on an individual basis and the punishment matched to the individual. A proper computerised record for each exclusion is maintained for submission to the local authority.

#### *Ethnic background of pupils*

#### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	948	118	4
White – Irish	1		
White – any other White background	4		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3		
Mixed – White and Asian	3		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	4		
Black or Black British – African	1		
Chinese	3		
Any other ethnic group	4		
No ethnic group recorded	78		

*The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### Commentary: Sixth form

17. Students' attitudes to their work are good. However, attendance is unsatisfactory in the sixth form. For example, in lessons seen during the inspection, nearly 13 per cent of students were absent. Nevertheless, students say they enjoy coming to school and discussions with them show they are very loyal towards it. A minority of sixth-form students are also sometimes unpunctual to lessons. There is no excuse for this as many of their classes take place in the sixth-form centre. Nonetheless, students respect each other's views, behave sensibly and there have been no exclusions from the sixth form. Students are interested in school life and the range of opportunities provided. There is, however, limited scope for them to take on areas of responsibility within sixth form, or the school as a whole. Although some read with younger pupils and help with extra-curricular clubs, there are few other opportunities for them to make their mark or to assume a leading role in new initiatives. Students' moral development is good,

but, in keeping with the findings in the main school, they have a limited awareness of other cultures and religions.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good.

18. Teaching is good and assessment used positively. Consequently, learning is good overall, and contributes to the pupils' and students' good achievement. There are good links with parents, who support their sons' and daughters' learning well. The quality of support, advice and guidance available for pupils and students is good. Nevertheless, the extent to which the school involves them in its life and work is an important area for improvement. Although the school's curriculum generally meets the needs of its pupils and students, some statutory requirements are not met. Staffing resources are good, but the quality of the accommodation remains a problem in some areas of the school.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall in Years 7 to 11. Teaching and learning are also good in the sixth form. The quality of assessment is satisfactory overall, and makes a clear contribution to pupil achievement. Assessment is good in the sixth form.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, particularly in the sixth form.
- Teaching and learning in citizenship are not developed well.
- The good practice in teaching methods is not always applied consistently enough throughout all departments.
- Learning is supported well through encouragement of high standards of behaviour in lessons.
- Classroom assistants help to support teaching and learning well for the pupils in their care.
- Teaching approaches to support the learning of gifted or talented pupils are inconsistent across departments.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' work are good, and support well pupils' understanding of how they are progressing.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory overall in science, design and technology, and in citizenship.

### Commentary: Main school

19. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are satisfactory in mathematics, science, design and technology and in modern foreign languages. They are good in English, ICT, art, geography, history, music and in physical education. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in citizenship.
20. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are satisfactory in English, science and in design and technology. They are good in mathematics, ICT, art, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music and in business education. Teaching is good in physical education and learning is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in citizenship.
21. In the best lessons, there are some significant common strengths across a wide range of subjects. These involve, for example, confident, knowledgeable and challenging teaching, which is rigorous in its questioning of pupils and ensures good pupil involvement and pace to the lessons. Most teachers give clear explanations, lesson objectives are well shared, and pupils' learning is underpinned and supported well. The majority of teachers establish a good working ethos and there is a good insistence on high standards of behaviour in lessons. Classroom assistants and other learning support are used well throughout the school.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 153 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	21 (13%)	74 (48%)	47 (31%)	8 (5%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons were seen.*

22. Overall there was no significant difference in the proportions of satisfactory or better teaching between year groups. However, a higher percentage of good or better teaching and learning was seen in Years 7, 9 and 11. Most of the unsatisfactory teaching and learning took place in citizenship or personal, social and health education. This was because the course was not planned well enough, teaching approaches were insufficiently challenging, or there was a lack of expertise or experience in the subject. Where poor and very poor teaching and learning took place, this involved a teacher not on the permanent staff of the school. Where some unsatisfactory teaching and learning were seen, for example in mathematics, this was because the work lacked challenge and was not planned well enough to meet the needs of all pupils in the group. Other weaknesses involve limited questioning techniques, on the part of some teachers, which do not always encourage pupils to think deeply enough for themselves about the subject or related issues. On occasions, learning is restricted because teachers talk at the pupils too much and do not give them sufficient opportunity to become involved in the lessons. Because of this, pupils do not always fully understand what they need to do to improve.
23. Teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs are good. There is good practice in subjects such as English, art and geography, but it is inconsistent in some other subjects. Individual education plans are good and provide well-focussed targets for pupils. There are good assessment procedures for special educational needs pupils, which help to raise standards. Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils. Gifted or talented pupils learn satisfactorily. However, teaching strategies to ensure a full range of enhancement work for gifted or talented pupils are still being developed across subjects.

### **Assessment**

24. Overall, procedures for assessing pupils' progress and attainment are good. There are clear guidelines issued to departments in the form of a well-structured and up-to-date practical assessment policy. The responsibility for establishing a school-wide assessment policy rests with a member of the senior management team. There is a clear recognition of the importance of regular and consistent assessment. However, the marking of pupils' work, the use of targets and the sharing of these with pupils range from very good in physical education to unsatisfactory in science, design and technology and citizenship. Nevertheless, most teachers provide clear guidance to enable pupils to know how well they are attaining in a subject, and what they need to do to improve.
25. Satisfactory use is made of assessment information to guide curriculum planning in most subjects. Detailed analysis of pupils' performance in national tests taken at various stages is established. This information creates a base from which predictions and targets for performance in the national tests and subsequent GCSE examinations can be made. This information is utilised well by most subjects, where a cohesive approach to the use of assessment data provides a sound basis for tracking pupils' progress throughout the school. However, a systematic and common approach to good practice has yet to be shared across all subjects to raise standards further.

### **Commentary: Sixth Form**

26. In the seven sixth-form subjects inspected in depth, teaching and learning were satisfactory in mathematics and geography. They were good in English, chemistry, ICT and in art. Teaching and learning were very good in business education. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen, in a sampled sixth-form lesson, where important opportunities were lost to further the students' personal development through multicultural and citizenship elements. Nevertheless, overall,

there was a higher percentage of good or better teaching in the sixth form than in most other year groups. Excellent teaching was seen during the inspection in a Year 12 business education lesson. Here, when dealing with marketing strategies, the teacher significantly raised students' knowledge and understanding through the use of real-life examples, which brought the learning alive. Teachers' command of their subject is a particularly good feature of sixth-form teaching. This often results in probing questioning of students to extend their thinking. In the best lessons, very good working relationships exist between teacher and students. Consequently, there is a visible partnership in learning where students and teachers work, discuss and debate together.

27. In the sixth form, assessment procedures are good. They are properly linked to the requirements of the examination boards. Consequently, significant use is made of examination criteria. Students' work is marked well and diagnostic comments enable students to know what they have to do to improve their work and standards.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is **unsatisfactory in the main school** because National Curriculum statutory requirements are not fully met. **It is satisfactory in the sixth form.** Provision for **curriculum enrichment and extra-curricular activities are satisfactory.** Some aspects of the school's accommodation are unsatisfactory and as a result, **accommodation and resources for learning are unsatisfactory** overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils do not always receive their full statutory curriculum entitlement.
- The curriculum in design and technology, modern foreign languages, ICT and in citizenship is unsatisfactory and does not fully meet statutory requirements.
- Responsibility for the curriculum lacks clear leadership and focus, and so planning is underdeveloped.
- Alternative arrangements for some pupils in Years 10 and 11 provide worthwhile learning opportunities.
- Participation in activities in sport and music is strong, and pupils benefit well from the range of activities organised by the modern foreign languages department.
- The sixth form does not have a structured enrichment programme, apart from some social events and religious visits.
- Staffing is good overall, but there is inadequate expertise overall in citizenship.
- Most departments have a suite of rooms, but a significant amount of accommodation is unsatisfactory or poor.

### **Commentary: Main school**

28. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 generally meets the needs, interests and aptitudes of pupils. New systems for grouping pupils, particularly with the needs of the most capable in mind, have been introduced this year. Closer contact with feeder primary schools is resulting in a growing awareness of the range of all individual needs. However, the school lacks the resources to provide computer-aided design and manufacture, even though it is a statutory requirement in design and technology. Citizenship studies in the main school are unsatisfactory because pupils' progress is not recorded and schemes of work are incomplete, and arrangements for the teaching of the subject are unsatisfactory.
29. Satisfactory preparation for further study and employment is provided through the personal, social and health education programme, and through opportunities for work experience in Years 10 and 11. However, access to design and technology, ICT and modern foreign languages is not available to all pupils, who might request them, even though the National Curriculum currently requires access to be provided. In this respect, the school has pre-empted some statutory changes, which are not due to be implemented until September 2004. Because of this, the school is not meeting current statutory requirements.

30. Design and technology, art, science and mathematics do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT in lessons. In this, they are not fulfilling their requirement under the National Curriculum guidelines, or their responsibility as part of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11, who do not study ICT as a separate subject, therefore, do not enhance their learning in this way. Consequently, statutory requirements for ICT are not fully met in Years 10 and 11. Members of the senior management team with responsibility for curriculum development do not monitor this situation. However, they are aware of the need to broaden subject choices for pupils, who are not attracted to wholly academic studies. Although the curriculum has been enriched, for example, by the introduction of vocational ICT, there are no established pathways yet for developing these, and similar studies, and continuing them into the next level of education. The school provides a worthwhile alternative curriculum for a small group of pupils, who are not benefiting from the standard range of National Curriculum subjects. They are, therefore, able to follow a range of accredited practical options at a local college.
31. Pupils with special educational needs have equality of access to all areas of the school's activities and to the same curriculum as other pupils. The school is now actively developing the curriculum for gifted or talented pupils.

### **Curriculum enrichment and extra-curricular provision**

32. There is a good range of sporting activities and musical ensembles. There is a good range of musical groups and regular concerts held in school and within the parish. Pupils in all year groups have good opportunity to represent the school in various sports. There is a sound range of lunchtime activities, such as table tennis. The modern foreign languages department fosters pupils' interest in languages well because of the range of modern foreign language clubs. Visits abroad, such as the pilgrimage to Lourdes, are popular and successful. There is a supportive range of catch-up clubs, either at examination times or to alleviate time and accommodation pressures in lessons. Nevertheless, some subjects do not yet provide clubs or activities outside of lessons. Furthermore, there is a lack of regular and informed monitoring of the quality of and participation by pupils in enrichment activities.

### **Accommodation and resources**

33. Staffing is good in most subjects where there are sufficient specialist staff to meet subject demands. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. It is good in modern foreign languages, geography and in the special educational needs department. In English, two rooms have poor ventilation and heating control and, consequently, are difficult in which to work. In art, the rooms are shabby and a roof leaks. In physical education, design and technology, and in music, accommodation is poor and significantly affects the learning and achievement of pupils. In design and technology, there are insufficient rooms for two practical food technology groups at the same time. One group has to do written work, limiting their opportunities for practical work. In physical education there is restricted access to some areas at different times of the year. This limits opportunities for some pupils. There is no soundproofing in the music rooms so that other pupils are disturbed. There is a lack of suitable practice rooms. Learning resources are adequate overall, though in design and technology there is a lack of equipment for pupils to cover the course fully, therefore, National Curriculum statutory requirements are not met for the subject.

### **Commentary: Sixth form**

34. Students receive plenty of individual support in their studies and there is a reasonable range of A-level courses, considering the relatively small number of students, who elect to stay on in Years 12 and 13. Some of these courses do not run every year because there are insufficient numbers of suitable applicants to make them cost effective. The exploration of possible links with other local providers, in order to share resources and expertise and so provide a broader range of studies, is in its early stages. There are very few openings for students, who require a

less academic programme, and no well-established links with the vocational subjects available in the main school. There is, therefore, no guaranteed continuity of learning. Practical difficulties such as the shortage of planned lesson time and the uneven spacing of lessons in mathematics, physics and geography reduce the quality of learning. Sixth-form students do not have a regular enrichment programme, although some take part in visits to Lourdes and all enjoy the regular social events.

35. In the sixth form, staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall. Professional expertise is better than in the main school in mathematics and science. Accommodation in the new sixth-form block is good, but remains unsatisfactory in art, where students have lessons in the main school. Sixth-form resources are satisfactory overall, and good in mathematics, science and in ICT.

### Care, guidance and support

Pupils receive **good support, advice and guidance. Arrangements to ensure pupils' care and welfare are satisfactory** overall. Nevertheless, there are some health and safety issues for the school. The extent of **the school's involvement of pupils and students in its work and development is unsatisfactory.**

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Whilst health and safety procedures are in place, the school has sometimes been slow in its action planning for improvement where problems are identified.
- There are effective child-protection procedures.
- Pupils receive good support, advice and guidance and teachers help them to improve the standard of their work.
- The school is slow to act upon pupils' views and suggestions for improvement in the life and work of the school.
- Careers advice has recently improved and students are pleased with the guidance provided.

### Commentary: Main school

36. Arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of pupils are satisfactory overall. The previous inspection criticised risk assessment procedures. Despite a recent audit, the school has not prepared an action plan and has, consequently, been relatively slow in making improvements. As a result, inspectors brought a number of health and safety issues to the attention of the governors. However, the school has been properly accepting the advice of the local authority and independent consultants on issues of health and safety. Child-protection procedures are in place and regular training sessions ensure members of staff are well aware of their responsibilities.
37. Most teachers use marking well to provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils know their exam criteria and have a clear idea of what it is they have to do in order to obtain the optimal result or exam grade. Subjects where pupils receive especially good guidance include art, geography, history, ICT, music and physical education. However, in other subjects, for example in science, pupils are not well supported and receive little constructive advice on how they can improve the standard of their work.
38. Pupils voice their opinions about school life through the college council. They have come up with numerous ideas and suggestions for improvement. These include seating in playground areas, provision of lockers and bag storage, girls to be allowed to wear trousers, more trips and visits, drama lessons, pupils to be mixed and seated during assemblies, music in the cafeteria and classrooms, an anti-bullying campaign, a different uniform for senior pupils and more non-uniform days. However, the school has taken up very few, although the pupils' suggestions for toilet and café refurbishments have been implemented. Whilst some issues, such as the school uniform, are in the school's development plan, this has not been effectively enough explained to the pupils. Analysis of the pre-inspection questionnaire shows one third

of pupils in Years 10 and 11 feel the school is not interested in their views. Inspectors agree with pupils' concerns. A substantial minority of pupils do not understand why more of their suggestions cannot be taken up and no longer see any point in making their views known.

39. Pupils, who have been identified as being gifted or talented, are especially well looked after in music. Teachers and teaching assistants provide an effective and caring service for all pupils with special educational needs.

#### **Commentary: Sixth form**

40. Students enjoy being in the sixth form and confirm their teachers provide good personal and academic help and support. Inspectors agree with these positive views. However, teachers in mathematics do not always challenge students, who are gifted or talented in the subject, or always provide the additional help and support these students need. Issues relating to health and safety echo those for the main school.

41. Analysis of the pre-inspection questionnaire shows almost one third of the students do not feel they received helpful advice when choosing the courses they would undertake in the sixth form. In addition, six out of 10 students are dissatisfied with the quality of careers advice provided. However, students spoken with during the inspection are much more positive. They say advice has since improved and it is now good. This was confirmed in a good sixth-form tutorial lesson taken by a representative from the careers service. In addition, the school has links with three universities and representatives visit to give students a good insight into life in higher education and to advise them on financial matters. The sixth form has a policy of open access and admits all the students, who want to join. Whilst this helps to increase the class size and, therefore, the viability of some of the courses, some students undertake studies for which they are unsuited. The school allows students to join courses and take a decision as to whether they wish to continue or swap courses after four or five weeks. This affects the school's statistical data and results in an apparently very high drop-out rate.

#### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

**Links with parents are good. Links with the local community are satisfactory. Links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory in the main school and unsatisfactory in the sixth form.**

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents support well their children's learning at home and at school.
- Parents receive good information about their children's progress, although annual and interim reports do not always include a comment about citizenship.
- Sixth-form links with other schools and colleges are underdeveloped.
- A significant minority of parents is dissatisfied with the level of communication between home and school and the extent to which the school seeks their views.

#### **Commentary: Main school**

42. Parents provide good practical support for the school. This support encourages their children to work hard and to do their very best. As part of the inspection process, parents were asked to complete a questionnaire. Analysis of their responses indicates that around one quarter of those, who expressed an opinion, feels the school does not communicate adequately and tends to keep them 'at arm's length'. For example, they feel they receive inadequate information about their child's academic progress. Inspectors disagree. Parents receive one detailed annual report and several other bulletins during the academic year. These reports provide parents with a clear picture as to whether or not their child is making the expected amount of progress, along with a good idea of how they can improve in the future. Pupils' annual reports in Years 7 and 8, however, do not comply with the requirement to comment on how they are getting on in the new National Curriculum subject of citizenship.

43. One third of those, who expressed a view, have concerns over the extent to which the school consults with them. Inspectors feel this aspect of the school's work is satisfactory. Although there is no parents' forum, the parent and teacher association has been consulted about the school's recent application for specialist Language College status. The school has circulated its own questionnaire to parents within the last year, but this attracted a low parental response.
44. Links between the school and the parents of pupils, who have special educational needs, are close. Good mutual support, and a spirit of ready co-operation, helps these pupils to achieve well in their work. There are good formal and informal contacts with parents of pupils, who have special educational needs. Nevertheless, the school reports some problems in persuading parents to attend reviews of progress where this applies.

#### **Commentary: Sixth form**

45. The school liaises with nearby college and sixth form in order to offer students in Years 12 and 13 a broader range of qualifications and courses. However, very few students take advantage of this collaboration, citing practical problems, such as transport, as mitigating factors. Social links with other schools and colleges are weak.

#### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The **leadership of the headteacher** and key staff **is satisfactory**. The senior management team provides **satisfactory** day-to-day **management**. **Subject leadership and management** are **satisfactory** overall. **Governors provide good support for the school** and through increasing involvement in the review process are developing a better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governance of the sixth form is good. **Nevertheless, governance is unsatisfactory** overall **because statutory requirements** for the teaching of ICT, design and technology and modern foreign languages **are not fully met**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher has a clear and practical vision for the development of the school that is well rooted in raising achievement.
- The governing body is very supportive of the school, and increasingly ensures it is involved in monitoring the work of the school and is better informed about strengths and weaknesses.
- There are significant areas for improvement in the line management and communications between some heads of department and senior management.
- Financial management of the school's budget is very good and the school actively seeks value for money in all its work.
- Aspects of the leadership and management of the curriculum lack cohesion, and a sharp enough rationale, which has led to some statutory non-compliance and inequalities in provision.
- Management of the sixth form is good and based upon regular communication between leaders and managers.

#### **Commentary: Main school**

46. The headteacher provides firm leadership, which is rooted in the Catholic ethos and liturgical life of the school. The headteacher's evaluation of the school's position is realistic and based upon sound evidence from the school review process. There has been a satisfactory review and monitoring of teaching, which has informed the school self-review and action plan. Senior managers carry out reviews with a brief to support and monitor teaching and learning as part of the process. Consequently, there is a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a vision for improvement, which includes a bid for Language College status. This is articulated in the college development plan. However, the means by which improvement is to be effected is not defined sharply enough. Subject leadership is

characterised by good specialist knowledge and the ability to build and manage effective teams.

47. Day-to-day management is secure, but the wider management of change and improvement on the basis of monitoring the work of departments is more variable. For example, the interpretation of performance data and its use to set targets for subject improvement are not yet fully understood by some teachers and heads of department. Whilst for the most part line management systems are satisfactory, there is a significant weakness in this area. Senior management believes procedures are in place to allow full consultation with staff on whole-school development issues and planning. However, some heads of department feel decisions are too often imposed upon them. It is the school's declared aim to develop and improve the strategic management role of heads of department as well as that of senior management. However, misconceptions between some staff and heads of department, through the school's line management system, are creating a barrier for the school in the further development of a fully integrated, partnership management system. Consequently, the use by senior managers and subject leaders of self-review to bring about improvement is not yet fully established and is sometimes compromised by weaknesses in procedures for the exchange of information and action, which is to be taken.
48. Governors are actively involved in the life of the school and are becoming more strategic in their work through greater involvement in reviews and improved communications with subject leaders. The governing body is taking a lead through the recently introduced series of meetings between heads of department and the curriculum committee. The meetings are starting to play an important part in helping the governors to fulfil their role in holding the school to account for its performance. The chair of the curriculum committee has written to each head of department giving a summary evaluation of these meetings. All heads of department have been invited to provide a similarly evaluative response. This is developing good practice as a mutually critical, but supportive, evaluation process. Overall, the work of the curriculum, pastoral and finance committees is particularly valuable. There are good systems for holding the school to account for its quality of education.
49. The learning support co-ordinator has shown very good leadership and management in setting up systems for special educational needs. The school and governing body are taking the required action to ensure the 2001 Code of Practice<sup>7</sup> for special educational needs is fully implemented, especially in relation to the roles of the special educational needs co-ordinator, key teachers and teaching assistants.

### **Commentary: Sixth form**

50. There is sound leadership and management of the sixth form. There are good links with the senior management team. The director of studies in the sixth form, the head of vocational education and the deputy head with responsibility for the sixth form are all based in the new sixth-form block. This promotes good communication and shared understanding of the sixth form. The director of sixth form monitors standards in all subjects. Day-to-day management and organisation are good. Governors have given strong support for the development of the sixth form and careful financial management balances the need to sustain courses with the cost effectiveness of some small groups. The school continues to review the effectiveness of courses and examines ways in which recruitment to the sixth form can be improved. It is seeking to develop a wider range of vocational courses to meet the needs of students, who stay on in the sixth form. Whilst there are links with other local schools, these do not have sixth forms and so offer no consortium benefits for sixth-form courses.

### **Financial information**

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<sup>7</sup> Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities, duties and tasks to ensure that pupils, who have special educational needs, receive the most appropriate help and support to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,790,900
Total expenditure	2,755,825
Expenditure per pupil	2,691

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	116,703
Balance carried forward to the next	151,525

51. There are very efficient and effective systems in place for the management of finance. The budget is managed very well because the bursar actively seeks best value in all aspects of the school's financial management. At some 5 per cent, the school's contingency balance of £151,525 is higher than average. Recommendations from auditors' reports are acted upon and the school's resources are used well. Taking into account the average standards attained by the pupils, the good quality of teaching and learning, the satisfactory leadership and management, provision for pupils' and students' personal development and improvement since the previous inspection, the main school and sixth form give overall satisfactory value for money.

## **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

#### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Attainment by the end of Year 9 is well above average and pupils' achievement is very good.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' good literacy skills.
- Pupils learn well because of the very good working relationships established in the classroom.
- Standards in the GCSE English language examination are not high enough.

#### **Commentary**

52. The proportion of pupils obtaining an A\* to C grade in the 2002 English language examinations was well below average for boys and girls and their levels of achievement were unsatisfactory. The results were lower than at the time of the previous inspection. In 2003, boys improved their performance, but that of girls declined. The 2002 English literature results were average overall and levels of achievement were satisfactory. The 2003 literature results were broadly similar. Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was well above the national and similar school averages, representing very good achievement. Boys attained better than girls. These results were an improvement on those for 2002 and a significant improvement on those attained at the time of the previous inspection.
53. Overall, the standard of written work seen at the end of Year 9 is well above average and pupils' levels of achievement are very good. This is because most pupils' extended writing is well organised, fluent and accurate. Pupils work in a range of styles and in this their access to computers is helpful. The standard of written work seen at the end of Year 11 is average and is an improvement on those attained in recent public examinations. This is because pupils had higher levels of attainment at the start of the course and their attitudes to the subject are very positive. Current achievement is satisfactory overall. This is because there are a number of older pupils of average competency, who do not express their thinking logically or accurately enough in their extended writing. Pupils with special educational needs write well and their levels of achievement are good.
54. Reading standards are above average and achievement in this skill is good. Pupils read a range of increasingly difficult texts from their own and other cultures and so enhance their awareness of the diversity of society. The moral and social issues they confront in their reading contribute to their personal development. Standards of speaking and listening are above average and represent good achievement. Pupils express themselves well in small group discussions and use standard English correctly when the situation demands.
55. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good in Years 7 to 11. The most effective teaching was seen in Years 7 to 9, where teachers were implementing strategies to improve pupils' literacy skills. As a result, these skills are developed well. Overall, teachers make good use of time and insist on high standards of behaviour. They employ a wide range of teaching strategies and use group work to develop skills of collaborative working. Pupils respond well to their teachers' encouraging and supportive approach, and this engenders confidence. Working relationships are strong and pupils work productively. Teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly and consistently. Questioning techniques are used well to test knowledge and understanding, but such techniques have not been sufficiently developed for pupils to be more critical of their own and other's work.
56. The leadership of the subject is good. There is a sense of common purpose and direction with a clear focus on improving teaching and learning, and raising standards. Working relationships

are strong and there is a commitment to on-going professional development. The subject's performance is reviewed systematically, as is the effectiveness of teaching. Management is satisfactory. Priorities for improvement and the action to be taken are set out in an up-to-date development plan. The department includes all pupils in everything it does and this promotes well equality of opportunity. Target setting and the monitoring of achievement are now well established. However, the effectiveness of management is weakened by the constraints placed on the head of department's scope for delegation because of the current staffing situation.

### Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. Pupils throughout the main school have good English language and literacy skills. They are able to adapt their writing to the needs of different subjects. Pupils show knowledge and understanding of a range of texts, many containing specialist terms, because of their well-developed reading skills. They read aloud confidently, fluently and with expression. Oral skills are well developed. Pupils explain themselves clearly at length. They develop and amplify the points they make and they are able to engage effectively in discussions because they are able to listen for extended periods of time. Pupils show respect for others' contribution. In vocational education, time is given for pupils to think and then explain what they know and understand, and this consolidates their learning. The provision for literacy is very good in the main school in modern foreign languages, particularly in developing pupils' command of sentence grammar and their ability to speak fluently and expressively.
58. The school has accorded the improvement of pupils' literacy skills a high priority. It has done much to develop policy and implement teaching strategies to raise standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The literacy co-ordinator has promoted the sharing of good practice across departments and has clear priorities for future developments. The work is well co-ordinated and there is a strong commitment to sustain and improve upon what has already been achieved.

### Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**. The school offers French in all year groups and pupils, particularly higher attainers, have the option to study Spanish. In addition, Italian is offered at GCSE level.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment in modern foreign languages are rising.
- The curriculum is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and statutory requirements are not met in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11.
- The curriculum leader has only been in post a short time, but shows very good leadership.
- Teaching does not focus enough on improving standards for higher-attaining pupils in some classes in Years 7 to 9.
- Very good enrichment activities contribute to the pupils' personal development.

### Commentary

59. Entries for GCSE in 2002 were too low for comparisons to be made against national averages. In 2003, results in Year 9 national tests were average. In the work and lessons seen, there was no significant difference between standards in the three modern languages inspected. By the end of Year 9 and Year 11, standards are average. Boys and girls achieve equally well. There are no significant differences in attainment across the four aspects of the subject. Pupils with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their peers. There has been a history of difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers, which has had an adverse effect on standards. This is still evident in Years 10 and 11.

60. By the end of Year 9, pupils satisfactorily understand the foreign language taught when spoken at near normal pace. Pupils carry out satisfactory conversations, read authentic passages and satisfactorily answer questions on them. Most pupils satisfactorily write short passages from memory. Higher-attaining pupils write at greater length and with good accuracy. However, the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is inconsistent and some higher-attaining pupils do not achieve well enough. By the end of Year 11, a majority of pupils satisfactorily carry out longer conversations and write longer passages using a variety of styles.
61. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. Higher-attaining pupils are better catered for in Years 10 and 11, especially with regard to developing their writing skills. Teachers control their classes well, achieving good behaviour with courtesy and respect. As a result, the working atmosphere in classrooms is good. Pupils behave well and show good attitudes to work. Teachers have good subject knowledge, especially of the techniques necessary to maximise exam grades. Teachers' and pupils' use of the language is good. The use of assessment to show pupils how to improve is underdeveloped.
62. There is a wide range of very good enrichment activities, which make a very good contribution to pupils' personal, as well as spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development. The subject leader has shown very good leadership in forming a clear view of areas for improvement and identifying priorities. The management of the subject is satisfactory, although the department review does not focus well enough on challenge or standards. The curriculum is unsatisfactory and has an adverse affect on standards, especially in Years 7 to 9. The statutory National Curriculum requirements for the teaching of modern foreign languages are not met in Years 10 and 11. Nevertheless, the subject has made satisfactory progress, overall, since the previous inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good attainment in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2003.
- The good teaching in Years 10 and 11 is raising pupils' achievement.
- The head of department provides good leadership.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT as a teaching resource.
- The lack of teaching strategies to cope with the wide range of abilities in some classes.

### **Commentary**

63. Good leadership and effective teaching have contributed to a good improvement since the previous inspection. In work seen, pupils' attainment by end of Year 9 is now average and achievement satisfactory. Standards in the 2003 Year 9 National Curriculum tests were above the national average and well above average when compared with similar schools. These results show a marked improvement in the number of pupils obtaining the higher Level<sup>8</sup> 6 and above, with the percentage being the best yet recorded by the school. There was no significant difference between girls' attainment and that of boys.
64. The percentage of pupils obtaining a GCSE grade A\* to C in 2002 was in line with the national average and the percentage of pupils obtaining a grade A\* to G was very high. There was no significant difference between the performances of boys and girls. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is above average and achievement is good. This level of attainment is attributable to good teaching throughout Years 10 and 11.

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<sup>8</sup> The National Curriculum has been written on the basis that pupils, by the end of Year 9, are expected to reach Level 5. If a pupil is attaining Level 6 or 7 then he or she is reaching standards above that expected for a pupil of his or her age.

65. Teaching is good and the majority of pupils at all levels are set work that is suited to their needs and abilities. Teachers are aware of the individual education plans provided for pupils with special educational needs, and good practice exists in the use of support staff. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching and many of the lessons seen were good or very good. Teachers have high expectations and demonstrate good classroom management skills, as a result of which pupils behave well and acquire new skills and knowledge. Good classroom displays raise the spirits and contribute to effective learning. Resource constraints have resulted in the insufficient use of ICT, although there are plans for further development. Some unsatisfactory teaching occurred where insufficient account was taken of the wide range of ability within the group and, as a result, work for some pupils lacked challenge. The great majority of pupils are motivated by the enthusiasm of their teachers and contribute well to class discussion and in response to questioning. Working relationships between pupils and teachers are good and built upon trust, respect and good humour.
66. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department recognises what issues need to be resolved, and leads a team of committed and well-qualified teachers. The introduction of the numeracy strategy, for example, has been very effective. Marking of pupils' work is regular. Good, constructive feedback to help improve future performance is usually provided and pupil self-evaluation has been established. The analysis of pupils' performance takes prior attainment into account, but the use of performance data to set individual subject-specific targets for pupils has not been fully established.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

67. The mathematics department provides good guidance for colleagues in other departments. It has provided in-service training as part of the whole-school development in numeracy. All departments have been provided with guidelines on implementing the numeracy strategy and have completed a numeracy audit and some have implemented their own policies. The numeracy co-ordinator attends head of department meetings and identifies areas for development. The mathematics scheme of work has been amended where possible to ensure topics are taught at the optimum time. For example, scatter graphs are taught in mathematics before being required within geography. Pupils are applying their numeracy skills satisfactorily in most subjects. For example, in home economics, pupils weigh ingredients, shape items, use cooking times and calculate costs. In science, pupils demonstrate competency in applying formulae and in geography they use and interpret scatter graphs and pie charts.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good improvement in national test results of pupils in Year 9.
- The good subject knowledge of teachers.
- The good working relationships between pupils and teachers.
- The leadership of the department is unsatisfactory.
- The inadequate use of assessment to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils' learning is often weakened by an over-reliance on their teachers.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning.

#### **Commentary**

68. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were below average at the time of the previous inspection. Since then, results have improved consistently and attainment in the 2003 national tests was in line with the national average and the results for similar schools. Pupil attainment on entry to the school is average and, therefore, achievement is satisfactory by Year 9. However, the performance of the most able pupils is below average.

69. Standards in GCSE examinations were in line with the national average in 2002. However, pupils' performance in both double award and single award science was significantly below their performance in most of their other subjects. Nevertheless, standards have improved since the previous inspection and are now in line with similar schools. Standards of work seen during the inspection were average across the full range of the subject. However, whilst achievement overall is satisfactory, there is no specific work set for gifted or talented pupils.
70. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Good lessons have a number of positive features. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and the working relationships between them and the pupils are respectful and trusting. However, pupils are often over-reliant on their teachers, who give insufficient opportunities for pupils to work independently or in small groups. Little use is made of the pupils' own experience to engage them in their work and they are rarely given opportunities to express their own understanding of their work. This restricts their interest in the subject.
71. Despite the improvement in the provision of ICT facilities, their use to support pupils' learning has not improved since the previous inspection and remains unsatisfactory. The use of attainment results to track pupils' progress and to establish targets for future attainment is being introduced. Although a new policy for marking pupils' work has been introduced recently, it neither has explanatory comments, nor does it provide any help to pupils in understanding what they need to do to improve.
72. **Whilst management of the subject is satisfactory, its leadership is unsatisfactory. The performance of the department lags behind that of English and mathematics, and there is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department. Progress since the governors' review of the subject in 2001 has been inadequate.**

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good achievement for pupils in Years 7 to 11.
  - There are very good assessment systems for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
  - Progress since the previous inspection has been good.
  - The good teaching in Years 7 to 11.
  - Target setting is not linked fully to ICT skills.
  - There is insufficient opportunity for the monitoring of teaching and learning in ICT by the school's manager of ICT across the range of National Curriculum subjects.
  - A small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have insufficient access to ICT in lessons, and statutory requirements are not met.
73. Teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003 show above average attainment. There has been some overall improvement on the previous year's results. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are above average and pupils' achievement is good. The proportion of Year 11 pupils attaining an A\* to C grade was average in 2002. For the first time in 2003, a small number of pupils were entered for the GNVQ examination. Results were disappointing with over a third of pupils failing the examination. It is no longer offered to pupils. However, standards of work seen for pupils at the end of Year 11 are above average.
  74. By Year 9, pupils make good use of a range of software, including spreadsheets, desktop publishing, word-processing and slide presentations. By Year 11, pupils satisfactorily use a variety of skills they have learned in previous years as they complete project work for the applied GCSE course. Continuous assessment is thorough and involves pupils, who are aware of what they need to do to improve their grades. This helps to raise standards overall. In Years 10 and 11, coursework helps train pupils to work independently, as they are able to retrieve or store information successfully on other computers, including those in the library.

75. Teaching and learning are good overall. Particular strengths of the teaching include management of pupils, good knowledge and understanding of the subject, effective monitoring and support for pupils and very good working relationships. As a result, pupils behave well, learn well and waste little time. Lessons are well planned, effective, and focused on individual pupil's needs, so that learning opportunities are maximised. Achievement in these lessons is good or better. Day-to-day management is good, with good schemes of work. Assessment systems in Years 7 to 9 are well implemented. Assessment in Years 10 and 11 is very thorough, and involves pupils in their own self-assessment. As a result, weak areas are identified, and standards are raised. In a few lessons, planning does not cater for the full range of pupils. Consequently, high attainers are neither sufficiently well challenged, nor low attainers supported effectively.
76. Leadership and management of the department are good. Documentation is thorough, effectively supporting teaching and learning, and development planning is good. There is a clear vision for improvement, raising standards and further supporting the use of ICT in other subjects. However, opportunities for monitoring teaching and learning in ICT across the curriculum are limited and do not ensure a consistency of approach, particularly with new staff. Some weaknesses are the result of decisions outside the control of the head of department. A small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have no ICT lessons and are not monitored to ensure they receive their statutory entitlement. Whole-school targets are often inappropriate for a significant proportion of pupils in ICT and, as a result, the department sets its own, relevant targets. Overall, there have been significant improvements since the previous inspection. Three permanent specialist staff and a technician have been appointed. There have been additional ICT suites created and a significant amount of hardware and software purchased.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

77. Cross-curricular use of ICT is unsatisfactory. Although there have been significant improvements in resources for ICT, most departments have not yet made full use of these. Good use is made of ICT in geography, physical education and for pupils with special educational needs. However, in mathematics, science, design and technology, art and in music, insufficient use is made of ICT to enhance pupils' ICT skills. The library is equipped with up-to-date computers through which pupils can search for information on the Internet. ICT rooms are available to pupils after school, providing good opportunities for them to continue their studies independently out of lessons.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils attain above average standards by Years 9 and 11.
  - Pupils learn and achieve well in response to the good teaching, and have good attitudes to their work and lessons.
  - There is good management of a successful subject.
  - There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.
  - Over-directive teaching sometimes restricts pupils' learning.
78. The 2002 and 2003 teachers' assessments of pupils in Year 9, and GCSE results in Year 11, show above average standards of attainment. The inspection confirmed standards by Years 9 and 11 are above average in the areas of knowledge, understanding, and the skills of analysing and evaluating evidence. Pupils are particularly successful in expressing themselves well in a range of writing. The good standards are the result of good teaching and

the positive attitudes of pupils towards learning. Pupils of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs and the gifted or talented, achieve well in response to the strong work ethos sustained by teachers. Teachers motivate pupils well and earn their respect. Particularly pleasing is the good achievement at all levels of both boys and girls.

79. Teaching is good. A notable characteristic is the way in which teachers mark work, give good feedback and set targets for pupils to help them improve standards. This was a feature of a Year 11 lesson on the 1920s boom in America, when the teacher focused closely on the GCSE examination criteria, so pupils knew how to progress from one grade to another. Teachers motivate pupils through the use of resources, such as film and propaganda posters, and they recognise the importance of building on pupils' literacy skills. A strong emphasis is put on developing the ability to write well, not only descriptively, but also demonstrating an awareness of how different forms of evidence can be interpreted and evaluated. Where teaching is only satisfactory, teachers dominate in their presentation of a topic, and miss opportunities to initiate more extended debate or develop pupils' skills as independent or collaborative learners.
80. The good management and sound leadership of the teacher in charge of history have been successful in motivating an effective teaching team and developing the use of ICT as an aid to good teaching and learning. Standards in history are higher than at the previous inspection, resources are more varied, and there is more use of computers as an aid to learning. Other strengths have been maintained, and these, along with the good achievement of pupils, mean there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above the national average in Years 7 to 9.
- The pupils show good attitudes to their work and achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The department is well led and managed.
- There is no regular monitoring of teaching.

### **Commentary**

81. Standards of work seen are above average at the end of Year 9 and have improved since the previous inspection. There is very little difference in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils achieve well, particularly in their written work and in their use of mathematical skills. Year 9 pupils write fluently about aspects of development and foreign aid, sharing their views in discussions. Those with special educational needs achieve equally well when work is adapted for them. In Year 11, standards in the GCSE examination have improved since the previous inspection. Results have fluctuated in recent years and were below average in 2002. They have risen since then and are now above average for girls and boys in the current Year 11. Good attitudes and thoughtful responses help these pupils to achieve well.
82. In the best lessons, teachers plan lesson activities well. This allows learning to proceed at a rapid pace, challenge the most capable pupils, and yet be accessible to all. Lower-attaining pupils make very good progress where they are encouraged and supported well. Learning is satisfactory rather than good in lessons where rigid systems limit opportunities for pupils to discuss ideas and to ask questions. Although pupils in Years 10 and 11 make good use of ICT in the preparation of their coursework, there is insufficient access to computers in lessons to help support learning and raise standards. Teachers mark pupils work thoroughly, but do not always add comments to show pupils exactly how to improve. However, regular assessed tasks, linked to national levels, record pupils' progress and help them to see how well they are

doing compared with pupils nationally. High-quality displays of pupils' work in teaching rooms and corridors bring the subject alive and encourage pupils' participation.

83. There is good leadership and management by the head of department, who has a clear vision for the future development of the subject. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, for example, in the creation of a more coherent teaching team and in the acquisition of new resources. Schemes of work are updated with new initiatives, which encourage pupils' interest. Assessment records of performance levels reached are used to inform teachers and to plot progress from year to year. Realistic targets for each group of pupils, based on a good understanding of their performance in geography, have been established. These provide a much more useful measure of improvement than school targets, which do not relate specifically to the subject. Although pupils' books are examined regularly, there is no rigorous monitoring of teaching to ensure consistency and to raise standards.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **unsatisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is managed well, but leadership has not secured sufficient improvement through the rigorous monitoring and development of national initiatives.
- Statutory requirements for the teaching of the subject are not fully met.
- Provision for computer-aided design and manufacture is unsatisfactory, as is teaching and learning in systems and control work.
- Standards in public examinations are too low.
- Teachers manage pupils well, and pupils develop good attitudes to their learning.
- Practical skills are taught effectively and teaching is good in food technology.
- Assessment systems in Years 7 to 9 are inconsistent.
- The limited accommodation and some large group sizes slow progress.

#### Commentary

84. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average, as they are for Year 7 pupils on entry to the school. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils develop satisfactory practical skills and knowledge over Years 7 to 9 using materials, which include food and textiles. However, they do not develop skills in computer-aided design or manufacture. Pupils' progress is restricted because their knowledge and understanding of electronics and control are weak. Teacher assessments in 2003 show boys' attainment to be average and girls' above. The proportion of higher Level 6 and above is below average because of some underachievement by the most able pupils. In lessons and work seen, standards are average and progress satisfactory in food, textiles and resistant materials. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good or better teaching in food technology. Pupils' attitudes are good and they are confident when working in practical situations. However, the most able are taught in large groups, thus, limiting the individual help teachers can give, which slows pupils' progress. Teachers give clear advice on how to improve with some good guidance, but assessment systems are inconsistent.
85. The number of pupils following full GCSE technology courses in 2002 was too small to make comparisons with national standards. However, overall standards by Year 11 have not improved since the previous inspection. The school does not currently provide a technology entitlement for all pupils and the national guidelines relating to current procedures for opting out of the subject have not been followed. Food, resistant materials and a systems and control course are running in Year 11, but there is only one systems and control group in Year 10. Standards of work seen are below average, but pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The strongest work is in food technology with some good use of ICT for research and presentation.

However, the sharing of the specialist food room slows progress, as pupils cannot develop coursework alongside their practical activities. In resistant materials, design work suffers because pupils work on unsuitable workshop benches in the absence of proper design facilities. Teachers monitor work effectively in resistant materials and food technology. Regular individual advice helps pupils understand how to improve. Lessons are well managed and enable pupils to work with good levels of independence. Pupils' progress in systems and control is unsatisfactory because lessons are poorly managed and specialist knowledge is not clearly communicated.

86. Day-to-day management is good, ensuring the department functions effectively. The limited accommodation is used well and technicians are deployed effectively to support teachers. However, the leadership of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There has not been a rigorous review of the subject and statutory requirements for the teaching of the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 11 are not fully met. The option system for pupils entering Year 10 has severely reduced choice for pupils in the combinations of courses on offer. There has been insufficient progress with national initiatives. Accommodation and resources for ICT have not developed sufficiently to support computer-aided design and manufacturing or attract pupils to technology.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The standards reached by pupils in Years 9 and 11 are above average.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and leads to pupils' good achievement.
- There is a clear and successful focus on raising standards.
- The analysis and use of performance data to help teachers' planning are weak.
- The requirements for pupils' use of ICT in the subject are not met.
- Accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory.

#### **Commentary**

87. Standards on entry are average, on the basis of work seen in Year 7. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average for boys and girls. By Year 9, pupils are challenged well through extended studies of chosen artists. They make well-written analyses of the work of artists and make a personal, creative response incorporating their studies. Pupils are developing as independent learners and achievement is good. Pupils with special educational needs achieve similarly well because work is adjusted well to their needs. However, pupils' use of ICT remains poor because of very restricted access to equipment.
88. In the GCSE results for 2002, the proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C was well above the national average, though there were fewer higher A\* and A grades than average. The subject leader's strategies were very successful in raising the overall standards of boys. Almost all boys gained at least a grade C. Standards in work seen are above average. Pupils produce well-presented units of work, which explore artists' work and inform the development of their own pieces. Sketchbooks are used well to record information, develop ideas and make personal written responses. Achievement is good across pupils of all levels of attainment.
89. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. Most pupils behave well, but if there is any misbehaviour, teachers manage it well. Teachers successfully engage pupils' interest with good introductions establishing what pupils know and explaining clearly any new material. Examples of pupils' work of the highest quality are used to inspire pupils and to set high expectations for both content and presentation. Work is adapted well for lower-attaining pupils so they respond positively to tasks and progress well.

Teachers support individual pupils well. Questioning is used well to help pupils clarify their intentions for their work. Assessment is particularly thorough and pupils engage in regular self-assessment, revealing they know how well they are doing and how to improve. However, some tasks are insufficiently challenging for higher-attaining pupils. For example, in a Year 8 lesson about Gaudi's buildings, templates were provided unnecessarily for all pupils.

90. Leadership and management are good and improvements have been sustained well since the previous inspection. There has been a clear and successful focus on the raising of standards. The quality of teaching is soundly monitored and developed through regular observation and feedback. The day-to-day use of assessment to support pupils' learning is good, but the analysis of performance data to help in future planning for improvement is weaker. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. Despite high-quality displays of pupils' work, the fabric of the rooms is poor with a leaking roof, poor decoration and shabby, mismatched tables and stools. Storage is inadequate, which limits the range and scale of pupils' work, especially with the large group sizes. The subject maintains high-quality displays of work around the school, which celebrate pupils' successes and greatly enhances the environment.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good, and teachers are enthusiastic, encouraging pupils to do their best.
- The pupils learn well because lessons are interesting.
- The standards attained by pupils in Year 11 are not high enough.
- Working relationships are good and underpin pupils' enjoyment of music.
- There is insufficient, suitable ICT equipment for use in music lessons.
- Accommodation is poor, mainly because there is no soundproofing between classrooms and a lack of suitable practice rooms.

## **Commentary**

91. The teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003 show above average standards. However, standards for the current Year 9 are only average, but their achievement is good. Overall, pupils' rhythmic work is strong, using graphic and traditional notation. The standards of performance by some more competent pupils are above average, especially when they are challenged creatively. Examination results at the end of Year 11 in 2002 were below average. In 2003, the percentage gaining A\* to C was similar. However, some more competent pupils attain average standards, but achievement for these pupils is good. This is because their compositions have a good sense of style and instrumentation with detailed written analysis of their pieces. Due to negative attitudes and weak performing skills, some less competent pupils only make satisfactory progress. This is because their melodic and performing work is limited, and compositions often lack shape and coherence.
92. Teaching is good because lessons are exciting and all pupils are involved. Good planning ensures musical skills are developed carefully and pupils sing regularly. They are expected to do their best. Regular performing sessions allow time to share and evaluate work. This means mistakes and performing inaccuracies are corrected quickly. Pupils with special educational needs and, who are gifted or talented, make good progress, benefiting from tasks structured for their individual needs. Teaching for pupils in examination classes is systematic and all pupils are individually challenged. Marking is thorough and evaluative, which ensures pupils are clear how they need to improve. However, individual targets are too general and not closely linked to specific musical skills. Good class management means pupils relate well to each other. Pupils' efforts and achievements are celebrated and valued. Resources are limited. The department is unable to make its required contribution to ICT, as there are insufficient appropriate keyboards and few computers. Lack of soundproofing means learning is frequently disturbed by sounds from adjoining classrooms and there is a lack of suitable

practise rooms. Despite this, pupils' application and concentration are generally good. There is a good range of musical ensembles. Pupils from all year groups enjoy making music together and performing regularly.

93. Leadership and management are good because of clear vision and planned direction for the department. Revised assessment procedures means the monitoring of pupil achievement is now more effective. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory, but neither accommodation nor resource issues have been resolved. Co-operation between staff is good. They support each other well and provide a strong musical environment for their pupils.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Year 9 pupils and those on the GCSE course attain above average standards and learn well.
  - Teaching is good, and pupils achieve well by the end of Year 9 and at GCSE level.
  - Assessment is used very well to improve learning.
  - There is good leadership and management of a developing department.
  - Most pupils have positive attitudes towards physical education.
  - Poor accommodation and limited time restrict the quality of learning and achievement of many older pupils in the core curriculum.
  - The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is restricted.
94. Teachers' assessments in 2002 and 2003 showed above average standards for pupils by Year 9. GCSE results were above average in 2002, although less good in 2003. The inspection confirmed that the knowledge, understanding and performance skills of pupils by Year 9, and by Year 11 for those taking the GCSE course, are above average. This is the result of good teaching and the positive attitudes of pupils. These pupils, including those with special educational needs and the gifted or talented, achieve well in relation to their standards on joining the school. Pupils on the non-examination core course in Years 10 and 11 are of an average standard and achieve satisfactorily. Although they are taught well, poor facilities and limited time restrict their progress and the quality of learning.
95. Teaching is good. All teachers show good subject knowledge whether teaching dance, games, or physical education theory, and convey this knowledge well to pupils through explanation, demonstration and by questioning. Teachers give very good feedback to show pupils how to improve. This was a feature of dance and netball lessons in which the teacher filmed pupils' performance as an aid to analysis and evaluation. Pupils respond well to high expectations, and enjoy the progression built into practices and games. In a minority of lessons, there is insufficient reinforcement of key techniques such as the racquet grip in badminton.
96. Leadership and management are effective in developing target setting, the use of ICT and professional development. However, indoor accommodation is poor, and this, combined with a restricted range of activities for older pupils and limited time for teaching the subject, restricts the quality of learning of many older pupils. Overall, standards and the quality of teaching and learning have all improved since the previous inspection. However, accommodation remains poor. Therefore, improvement has been only satisfactory overall.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

97. During the inspection, two vocational courses were sampled. These were business education and child development.

#### **Commentary: Business education**

98. Three lessons were sampled, one in Year 10 and two in Year 11. Standards of attainment were average in Year 10 and above in the Year 11 lessons. Pupils' work is well presented and their ICT skills are satisfactory overall. Their portfolios show sound improvement in research skills from Years 10 to 11. The most able pupils show very good attention to detail in their work. Teaching is good overall and lessons well planned. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and encourage well the use of ICT. Literacy and numeracy are soundly promoted through the teaching, and technical language is well used and explained. Working relationships are good and the pupils' attitudes towards the subject very good overall. There are very good assessment practices and pupils receive detailed written reviews on progress, and advice for further improvement. However, this course is currently only offered to some and, consequently, others do not have the opportunity to take the subject.

#### **Commentary: Child development**

99. Two lessons were sampled, one in Year 10 and one in Year 11, both in lower-ability groups. Although coursework is currently below average, standards of attainment in this course are improving. This is a result of, for example, pupils' work being drafted, reviewed and re-drafted. Pupils' research skills range from average to poor. Some lower-ability pupils have difficulty in achieving the level of detail required for the course. However, overall, the progress of the majority of pupils is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Lesson planning is good, but the pace of lessons sometimes adversely affects the quality of learning. In the lessons seen, the majority of time was teacher led because pupils lacked confidence and required regular assistance. Therefore, pupils' independent learning skills are weak. Nevertheless, pupils enjoy the subject as teachers plan activities at levels, which allow all pupils to succeed. Therefore, achievement is generally good. Teachers have a good command of the subject and work hard to instil confidence in their pupils.

### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

Provision in personal, social and health education is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- This area of learning is well planned and meets the needs of pupils' personal development.
- There is a good contribution to the pupils' moral development.
- The assessment of pupils' work is neither sufficiently analytical nor helps pupils to improve.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning does not raise standards.

#### **Commentary**

100. Standards in all years are average and achievement satisfactory. Personal, social and health education is taught in all year groups, but the drugs and sex education aspects of the subject are taught separately through religious education and science. However, limited lesson time for this area of learning is restricting the raising of standards and achievement. This is because curriculum time for the subject is shared with citizenship. Nevertheless, personal, social and health education is seen by the school as a key part of their approach to encouraging pupils' personal development. It is an important pastoral tool in enabling pupils to develop skills, attitudes, values and independence of thought, feelings and actions. The main thrust of the programme concentrates on personal, moral and social development. However, although these elements are well planned for, the time allocation does not provide sufficient personal and social opportunities for the programme to be fully effective.

101. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers employ a satisfactory range of skills, which enable pupils to reflect on and learn about the chosen themes for study. The teaching team is beginning to develop an expertise in the subject, as they are secure in their knowledge and approach chosen themes with confidence. Staff and pupil working relationships are generally good and this enables pupils to develop their own opinions and attitudes in an atmosphere of trust.
102. The assessment of pupils' work is recognised by the school to be an area for development. At present, it is insufficiently formal and does not provide evidence of the progress and achievement of pupils. The assessment of pupils' attitudes and values lacks rigour. The subject co-ordinator approaches the work with commitment and a clear sense of purpose and direction. However, the monitoring of staff and pupils' work is undertaken on an informal basis, and this is not well targeted on raising standards. Since the previous inspection, the personal, social and health education programme has continued to be developed and the basic needs of pupils are met. Improvement overall has been satisfactory.

## **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and pupils' achievement are unsatisfactory.
- Standards of attainment are below average.
- The development of a full curriculum programme to meet National Curriculum requirements is incomplete and statutory requirements are not met.
- Statutory requirements for the reporting of citizenship to parents are not fully met.
- The contribution that other subjects make to citizenship education, the systematic use of assessment and the monitoring of citizenship are all underdeveloped.

## **Commentary**

103. Citizenship is taught in modular units, during form tutor time, and alternates with personal, social and health education lessons. The limited amount of time available means coverage of the two subjects is restricted.
104. Standards in Years 7 to 10 are below average in relation to that which can be expected of pupils, owing to the limited amount of time given to the subject. There is, currently, no citizenship programme in Year 11. Nevertheless, the school is committed to the development of citizenship education and sees it as integral to pupils' personal development. The subject has been developed recently and is still in its early stages. However, significant steps have already been taken to plan for its teaching with careful thought and attention being given to the pupils' personal development.
105. Whilst the teaching of citizenship, as a subject, is supported by a comprehensive scheme of work, it is not fully supported by related themes and topics covered in other subjects. Consequently, citizenship development is not planned or monitored in a systematic way. Pupils have additional opportunities to develop an understanding of responsible citizenship and the democratic process through activities such as the school council. However, the work of this council is currently perceived by pupils to be of little value in initiating change. The use of citizenship themes, such as economic and political literacy, has been introduced recently. These activities are underdeveloped and not yet an effective enough feature of the curriculum.
106. Teaching insufficiently challenges pupils to develop their own attitudes towards responsible citizenship. In the lessons observed, the teachers' limited knowledge and lack of confidence did not enable pupils to understand the concept of democracy. The restricted use of questions and teaching styles did not enable pupils to think enough about their own responses to issues.

107. The leadership is committed to improvement but the management of the subject is unsatisfactory. Currently, pupils' attainment and progress is not assessed and there is no identified citizenship education in Year 11. In addition, there has been no reporting to parents of pupils' achievement and progress in the subject. Well-focused training for teachers, to promote higher standards and form important judgements, has yet to take place.

### **Careers education and guidance**

Careers education and guidance is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The organisation of careers information is efficient and comprehensive.
- Some careers lessons do not interest and involve pupils sufficiently.

### **Commentary**

108. The careers co-ordinator has developed an efficient system for planning and supporting form tutors, who are responsible for careers advice and guidance within personal, social and health education lessons. However, the quality of these lessons is inconsistent and some pupils are not motivated by or interested in the material provided. Additional information for pupils is available through the careers library and the careers service, to help them explore future career options and make appropriate subject choices. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, who follow an alternative curriculum at college for one day a week, are very carefully monitored and encouraged through regular visits and the school's contacts with parents. Opportunities for work experience for all pupils in Year 10 widen their views on employment.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, seven subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002 (the latest year for which national comparisons are available).

### Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	10	30.0	74.2	0.0	34.3	8.0	31.3
Chemistry	18	72.0	84.8	11.1	36.9	24.4	35.2
Biology	14	64.3	81.6	0.0	33.2	54.0	33.2
Physics	5	80.0	80.2	20.0	36.2	24.0	34.3
Design and technology	4	100.0	89.2	25.0	32.0	35.0	35.7
Business studies	11	36.4	89.1	0.0	31.7	9.1	35.4
Information technology	10	100.0	78.2	20.0	20.6	35.0	28.5
Physical Education	7	71.4	88.2	0.0	27.7	22.9	33.8
Art	10	100.0	90.0	30.0	42.7	39.0	39.0
Geography	11	90.9	88.3	18.2	36.4	31.8	36.3
History	9	88.9	91.8	44.4	37.2	37.8	37.8
Religious education	11	100.0	90.9	18.2	38.9	36.4	37.9
Sociology	21	42.9	83.7	4.8	33.6	12.9	33.8
Psychology	19	68.0	83.2	15.8	32.5	28.0	33.6
English Literature	18	100.0	94.4	33.3	37.9	41.1	38.9
English Language	10	90.0	92.0	10.0	29.9	26.0	35.7
General Studies	53	47.0	78.6	0.0	25.7	14.7	30.0

### Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	2	100.0	93.3	50.0	52.2	70.0	84.7
Chemistry	8	100.0	94.0	25.0	45.9	67.5	81.1
Biology	3	100.0	91.6	33.3	36.3	73.3	74.1
Physics	3	100.0	92.8	66.6	42.8	80.0	78.6
Design and technology	2	50.0	95.3	0.0	35.5	30.0	76.5
Business studies	3	100.0	96.4	0.0	32.8	53.3	76.5
Information technology	5	100.0	89.1	0.0	22.4	56.0	64.1
Physical education	3	100.0	95.4	0.0	29.5	33.3	73.2
Health and Social Care	8	75.0	90.3	0.0	16.7	32.5	62.9
Art	4	100.0	96.1	0.0	48.7	70.0	85.1
Geography	10	100.0	97.1	20.0	40.5	78.0	80.9
History	6	100.0	97.1	0.0	41.0	70.0	81.2

Religious Studies	5	100.0	96.3	0.0	44.0	56.0	82.2
Sociology	7	100.0	95.4	0.0	39.6	60.0	79.1
Psychology	5	100.0	94.3	40.0	38.9	76.0	77.7
English Language	14	100.0	98.3	14.3	36.5	71.4	80.1
English Literature	9	100.0	98.5	22.2	43.7	82.2	84.3
Italian	1	100.0	N/a.	0.0	N/a.	60.0	N/a.
General Studies	25	100.0	90.1	16.0	29.1	72.8	69.3

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

Provision in English is **good**. Some 40 students follow English language and literature courses in the sixth form. AS and A-level courses are offered in English language and literature and a basic communication skills course is run in Year 12.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standard of English language work is above average and students' achievement is good.
- Students learn well because of the well-informed and challenging teaching.
- Some of the teaching seen lacked the rigour and challenge of the best.

#### Commentary

109. Standards attained in the 2002 AS and A-level English literature examinations were average. Results in recent years have been in line with national averages. There was no AS English literature in 2003. All students entered for A-level English language and literature in 2003 gained an A to D pass. The 2002 results were an improvement on the standards attained at the time of the previous inspection when results were below average. The 2002 A-level English language results were below average, as they were in 2001 and at the time of the previous inspection. The 2002 AS English language results were also below average. Levels of achievement in both subjects have been satisfactory given students' prior attainment on entry to the courses.
110. Standards seen in the Year 13 A-level English language group are above average and achievement is good. Standards at AS level are also above average and achievement good. The standard of work seen during the inspection in AS English literature is below average, but achievement is satisfactory given that attainment on entry to the course is below average. There are no students in Year 13 studying English literature to A-level.
111. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers prepare well and provide detailed information, often in the form of worksheets and prepared notes, relating to what the students have to learn. Questioning is rigorous and is effective in testing understanding and recall; consequently, students gain in knowledge and understanding. For example, students in both years have a good understanding of word origins and meanings and can use linguistic terms correctly. They have good analytical skills, which enable them to compare texts from different periods and so track the development of the English language. Nevertheless, some of the teaching was insufficiently demanding of students because of a lack of pace and challenge. However, the need for greater experience and continuing professional development to improve the quality of the teaching to that of the best is recognised by the department.
112. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The supportive approach to teaching gives students of all abilities confidence and they apply themselves diligently to their work. Teachers work closely to evaluate and improve their teaching strategies and to monitor and raise students' levels of achievement. Very few students leave the courses during the

academic year. The standard of work seen in English language is better than at the time of the previous inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of attainment in AS level examinations are low.
- The teachers have a strong personal knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- There are few opportunities for independent learning or investigative work.
- The very good working relationships between students and teachers.

### **Commentary**

113. Standards of attainment at AS level in 2003 were an improvement on the 2002 results, which were well below national expectations. In work seen during the inspection, student attainment at AS level was average overall, although there is a wide spread of performance. The majority of students are making good progress, but some lack confidence when tackling problems, which are not straightforward. This is in part a reflection of an entry policy, which allows students to start the course with low levels of prior attainment. The timetable arrangements for AS classes are also unsatisfactory in that the total allocated time is less than in most schools and the teaching of pure mathematics occurs during one double period per week. The very small number of A2 level entries in 2002 and 2003 make comparisons with national averages inappropriate. The four students currently in Year 13 have obtained good results at AS level and are on target to achieve high grades at A-level.
114. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and lessons are well planned with clear objectives being conveyed to students. Lessons are, however, teacher-dominated and there are limited opportunities for independent learning. The marking of students' work is generally good, although in some cases there is a lack of constructive feedback. Very good working relationships exist between students and teachers.
115. At sixth-form level, the leadership of the department is satisfactory, but there are aspects of unsatisfactory management, resulting in students failing to achieve satisfactorily. There is no obvious strategy for helping students with low prior attainment levels cope with the demands of the AS level course. Analysis of students' performance has been established, but insufficient use has been made of this to fully assess students' progress or to set targets to help them improve.

## **SCIENCE**

116. During the inspection, chemistry was inspected in depth. Work in biology and physics was sampled. In the three lessons of biology seen, standards were average. Students' achievement levels were good. Students made good learning gains as a result of well-planned and knowledgeable teaching. In the one lesson of physics seen, standards were below average. Teaching and learning were satisfactory. Students' achievement levels were satisfactory.

### **Chemistry**

Overall, the quality of provision in chemistry is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to structure the work effectively.
- Students work very hard in lessons and make good gains in their learning.
- The achievement of both male and female students is good.

- The leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Students' independence and self-study skills are insufficiently developed.
- Insufficient specific tasks are set in order to meet the needs of higher-attaining students.

## **Commentary**

117. A-level results in 2002 were well below average. All students gained at least grade E, but only half the national average percentage achieved higher A or B grades. Male students' attainment was higher than that of females. Results in 2003 improved, with more students gaining A or B grades. AS level results were also higher in 2003, with nearly all students gaining at least grade E.
118. Standards in the subject are improving and are average overall. Most students develop satisfactory knowledge and understanding, although a significant minority attain higher standards. Achievement is good in Years 12 and 13, with students improving well upon their prior attainment levels. There is no significant difference between the achievement of males and females. Teaching focuses well on helping individual students develop their understanding and, as a result, they make good progress. This is helped by the high quality of students' written work, which provides a good basis for revision. Students concentrate very well in lessons and work hard. They enjoy the subject and are keen to learn. All of them are well involved.
119. Recruitment and retention rates are good with many students progressing to science courses in higher education. Students respond very well to the good teaching and, as a result, make good gains in learning. Students have confidence in their teachers and working relationships are good. They value the high-quality support and guidance provided. In some cases, however, this results in students being over-reliant on teachers for information and direction. Some students lack confidence when asked to tackle on their own more difficult chemical concepts. A more measured approach is yet to be employed to encourage students to think for themselves.
120. During the inspection, teaching was good. There were some very effective lessons seen. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use well to develop students' understanding. A good variety of approaches are used and lessons are structured in ways, which make clear connections between different aspects of the work. In the very good lessons, teachers have high expectations and provide very challenging activities. However, higher-attaining students are not regularly given tasks of a more demanding nature, particularly during independent study time. Teachers assess students' progress well and provide good guidance on how to improve. At present, however, individual development targets are set with insufficient reference to national standards of attainment.
121. Leadership and management are good. Standards are monitored effectively. The co-ordinator has a very good awareness of strengths and weaknesses, which has led to clear action points for improvement. Teaching in the subject is well directed, with the two staff involved working together effectively to plan and organise the course. Teachers have a good understanding of A-level requirements and provide students with good advice and guidance. There has been good improvement over the past four years, with higher overall standards, better provision for ICT and improved accommodation and resources.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well because they are taught well.
  - Students learn successfully to work independently.
  - The department's assessment systems are very good.
  - Students have very positive views of, and very good attitudes towards, the course.
122. AS and A-level examination results are inconsistent owing to the small number of students taking the courses. In the 2002 AS level examination, results were above average overall. All students gained a pass, which was higher than the national average, and the percentage gaining higher A and B grades equalled the average. At A-level in 2002, although all students gained a pass, results were well below average. In 2003, five out of seven students passed the AS level course and seven out of eight passed the A-level course. A significant number of students did not continue onto the A-level course for 2003. Standards of work of current students are average. Nevertheless, these standards represent good achievement in relation to results at GCSE where some students did not pass the examination in ICT or got low grades in Year 11. More males than female students take the course.
123. Standards of work seen are average. In Year 13, students achieve well. They analyse and test their work thoroughly. Students in Year 12 achieve satisfactorily. They are beginning to appreciate how computers can assist businesses and the use of computers in society. Teaching is good overall. This leads to good learning. The best teaching challenges students to work independently so they find for themselves how to solve problems. Through good teaching, students realise there are often several ways to approach a problem and can assess the advantages and disadvantages of each. In these lessons, students discuss their work and learn well how to improve. Students have very good attitudes towards work. They appreciate the very good support from staff, the loan of laptops and the good quality of the rooms in which they work.
124. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Students are given high-quality information so they know exactly how to gain marks on each assignment. Assessment systems are very good. They are used effectively to identify strengths and areas for improvement and track attainment and progress. Students are fully involved in this assessment process, so they know what to do to improve. The significant improvement in accommodation and resources in the subject represents good progress.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Fieldwork makes a good contribution to students' learning.
- Students with a wide range of prior attainment are well supported.
- Students' independent learning skills are not well developed.
- Not enough time is allocated for lessons.

### **Commentary**

125. Standards are below the national average overall. Groups are generally small, and results have fluctuated recently. In 2002, they were below average at the higher A-level grades. Males performed better than females. In 2003, A-level grades at the end of Year 13 improved, with four of the five students gaining a grade A or B. Results were below average at AS level for students, all male, in Year 12. Standards of work seen during the inspection were below

average in Years 12 and 13. Students' prior attainment is below average overall and some have not studied geography for GCSE. For these students, their background knowledge is at a low level, for example, in their experience and comprehension of map work. Achievement is satisfactory overall. It is good for the well-motivated students in the current Year 12, but reduced in Year 13 for about half the group, who, despite their enjoyment of lessons, have a casual attitude to their work.

126. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons well, and work hard to interest and enthuse students in as many ways as possible, especially through fieldwork opportunities. Students with a wide range of prior attainment are welcomed and offered plenty of support and help in lessons and at other times of the school day. However, allocated teaching time is low and has to be divided between the two separate year groups. This reduces opportunities to explore topics in depth and to extend students' background knowledge. Teachers' creativity is curbed because they need to cover units of work rapidly, and then allocate a significant amount of work to students for individual independent study. Whereas some students are keen to learn, others do not use this directed time profitably and have a poor record of handing in homework.
127. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Teachers' experience and very good knowledge of subject requirements result in good day-to-day organisation and management. Despite the practical difficulties of the timetable and the uncertainties of student numbers from year to year, there is a strong commitment to raising standards. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

### **Art**

Provision in art is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The assessment of students' work and the monitoring of their progress are very good.
- The curriculum is enriched with a very good range of additional activities.
- Students have a very good attitude to the subject.
- Recruitment to the courses remains low.
- Accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory.
- The use of ICT by students is at an early stage of development.

#### **Commentary**

128. The small number of students entered for the A-level examination in 2002 passed with at least a grade E, but none gained the higher A and B grades. However, most students reached the target grade set by the school. Standards currently attained by students are average. Students produce sustained studies with a very individual response to broad themes. Higher-attaining students are technically accomplished, with very competent handling of drawing and painting media. There is some underlying weakness in the drawing skills of other students, but they use a good range of other techniques to make images. All students make clear connections with the work of the artists they study. The examination of the art of other cultures is a rich source for students' own creative responses. Although at an early stage in development within art, some students use ICT well as a development tool in their work.
129. Starting from a below average level of attainment, achievement is good for the two Year 12 students, who have been very productive over the first few weeks of the course. Just one Year 13 student is studying to A-level and is achieving well.
130. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Despite very small numbers, teachers support students well without directing students' work. Emphasis is on the experimental nature of the

students' work and its development. Assessment is regular and ongoing. Students receive regular written feedback on how well they are doing and how they can improve. Students are involved in useful self-assessment. They work in a sustained and focused manner. Students are provided with very good course information, which sets out course details and explains the use of sketchbooks, ICT and writing about art.

131. The day-to-day management of the subject is good. There is good planning in response to course requirements and the enrichment of the curriculum is very good. This includes gallery visits, visiting artists, life-drawing classes at a local college, work placements and other links. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. There have been no significant changes since the previous inspection. Standards remain average, the quality of teaching and learning remain good, but recruitment to courses is very low. As with the main school, accommodation is unsatisfactory.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Business education**

Provision in business education is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Improving standards due to the very good teaching and very positive attitudes of the students.
- Teaching is very good, lessons are well planned, expectations are high and progress is very good.
- Assessment is very good and students are aware of their achievements and how to improve.
- The lack of resource materials, such as periodicals, magazines and newspapers, is a weakness.
- There is a lack of organised visits, or visiting speakers in lessons, to support learning.

#### **Commentary**

132. The number of students studying business education is too small for accurate comparisons with national averages. However, standards are now above average, representing an improvement upon previous years when standards were slightly below the national average in the higher grades. This represents very good achievement because of very good teaching of students, who are eager to learn. Progress is very good. Work is well organised, providing evidence of good research skills and some analytical ability when dealing with hypothetical situations in business. In all lessons seen, there was evidence of students engaging in discussions on a range of issues. Consequently, students demonstrate reasonably well-developed skills in forming and defending opinions. Very good teaching offers the students' opportunities to develop skills of independent learning and, therefore, they are capable of planning their own work and conducting research.
133. The quality of teaching is very good, which is a considerable improvement from the previous inspection. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject, fostering interest and understanding in the students through carefully planned lessons. Teachers ensure students are well aware of expectations in lessons and, therefore, progress is very good. Working relationships in lessons are very good, demonstrating high levels of mutual respect and understanding. Teaching strategies are carefully orchestrated to provide high levels of individual advice and support in order to promote knowledge and understanding. Expectations are high; therefore, the work is challenging, allowing all students to experience the complex nature of business.
134. Literacy is an integral part of all lessons and, therefore, students improve their skills in communication and the presentation of their work. Assessment is very good. All students have attainment targets and they are capable of discussing their progress towards achieving them. A number of students interviewed have career plans and are knowledgeable and articulate when discussing their work. They fully appreciate the quality of teaching, support and

guidance given to them by their teachers. Students are starting to access reference materials on the Internet using laptop computers. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching and learning is not enhanced by the overall lack of newspapers, periodicals and magazines to inform pupils about the local and worldview of business. This limits the fostering of a wider understanding of current issues relating to business and society. A lack of organised visits, or visiting speakers in lessons, prevents the extension of students' knowledge and understanding in order to raise standards.

135. The management of the department is satisfactory. Business education has recently been re-located within the ICT department and, therefore, the effect of the new management arrangements cannot be fully appreciated at this time. However, teachers share a clear vision, promoting high expectations, and work as a very effective team, sharing best practice and supporting each other well. Schemes of work are detailed and taught effectively. Assessment is very effective, and is used to influence the planning of lessons. It gives the students a clear understanding of their progress, attainment and future expectations. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

### **Key skills courses**

#### **Commentary: Language and literacy across the curriculum**

136. Students have good English language and literacy skills. They have good communication skills and are able to present their research findings succinctly, both orally and in writing. Students often explain themselves clearly and at length. Their coursework assignments are of a high standard and the work they do in subjects such as ICT is, therefore, good. Reading skills are highly developed in the interpretation and evaluation of a wide range of texts.

#### **Commentary: Mathematics across the curriculum**

137. Key skills provision in the application of number is unsatisfactory. No students were entered for the qualification in 2003 and during the inspection only one student attended the scheduled lesson.

#### **Commentary: Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

138. Key skills in ICT are taught mainly through provision in other subjects. In discussions with students during the inspection, some were concerned about their access to equipment. This was particularly the case if they did not have home computers and school equipment, such as printers, broke down. However, the school has now introduced a programme where students have access to laptops in order to alleviate problems of access, and to help in the development of students' key ICT skills.

### **Personal, social and health education – the sixth-form tutorial programme.**

**Careers education and guidance is good in the sixth form.** However, provision for **students' personal development is unsatisfactory** overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The tutorial programme promotes the development of key skills well.
- Sixth-form students value the improved careers advice now available to them.
- There are limited opportunities for students to take responsibility or hone their personal skills.

### **Commentary**

139. The tutorial programme in Years 12 and 13 provides a valuable opportunity for students to develop key skills. The curriculum includes a range of advice and activities, which enable students to satisfactorily enhance their organizational and study skills relating specifically to their examination programme. Topics, such as effective reading, note taking and how to prioritise their studies, are supporting students' learning well.
140. In lessons seen, teachers provide good advice and guidance concerning applications for university and in careers support. A good programme of lessons designed to develop critical thinking skills helps students to prepare for further education. For example, one lesson not only involved a good level of teacher-initiated discussion, but also enabled students to develop effective strategies in presenting arguments. This programme is well supported by the school's partnership arrangement with the local careers service.
141. However, other aspects of personal, social and health education development, which enable students to explore personal, moral and social issues, are inadequate overall in the subjects and areas inspected. For example, there is currently no active sixth-form council and students do not form part of the main school council. Opportunities for developing students' personal skills, giving them responsibility within the school and providing a vehicle through which students' views may be canvassed, are missed.

### **OTHER SUBJECTS SAMPLED IN THE SIXTH FORM**

142. During the inspection, a number of other sixth-form courses were sampled. These included accountancy, physical education, health and social care, child development, history, sociology, psychology, French and general studies.

#### **Commentary: Accountancy**

143. One Year 12 lesson in accountancy was sampled. Teaching, learning and students' achievement were good. Standards were average. Strengths included the teacher's subject knowledge, assessment methods, planning, working relationships, the monitoring and support of students, and the range of activities provided. These strengths stimulated and motivated students. They are developing a thorough understanding of accounting procedures.

#### **Commentary: Physical education**

144. One Year 12 lesson in physical education was sampled. Teaching, learning and students' achievement were good. Standards were average. This was a good lesson overall because of the quality of the teacher's explanations, subject knowledge and establishment of good working relationships with the students. As a result, students were well motivated, achieved well and made good progress. Good attention was paid to the development of students' key literacy skills, particularly speaking and listening.

#### **Commentary: Health and social care**

145. Two lessons in AVCE health and social care were sampled; one combined Year 12 and 13 class and one single Year 13 class. In this course, teaching is good, so that students progress and achieve well. Because of this, standards of attainment are rising and approaching the national average. Students enjoy the subject and their attitudes and response to their work are very good overall.

#### **Commentary: Diploma in child development**

146. Three lessons were sampled in this diploma course, one in Year 12 and two in Year 13. This course is very well managed. Teaching is very good and, therefore, students make good, and often very good, progress. Assessment is very effective, giving the students' valuable support. Consequently, they have a good understanding of their achievements and progress.

#### **Commentary: History**

147. One Year 12 lesson in history was sampled. Teaching, learning and students' achievement were very good. Standards were above average. This was a very good lesson because the teacher's expectations and approach provided good levels of challenge for the students. As a result, they made very good progress. The students' personal development was supported

well through being given the confidence to debate historical issues. There was a good focus on literacy through the development of students' writing skills.

**Commentary: Sociology**

148. One Year 13 lesson in sociology was sampled. The specialist teaching of sociology was good, and showed good, professional subject knowledge and understanding. This enabled satisfactory learning and achievement by the students. However, the lesson was unsatisfactory overall. This was because, whilst concentrating on sociological theories, there were significant lost opportunities to enhance the students' personal development through the multicultural and citizenship elements of the work. These aspects were not planned for in the teaching strategies for the lesson.

**Commentary: Psychology**

149. Two lessons in psychology were sampled, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Teaching, learning and students' achievement were good. Standards were average. Strengths included good questioning techniques by the teacher, which challenged students. This enabled individual students to extend their understanding of the subject. As a result, their analytical and interpretative skills were being developed well. Students were reflective on the issues and showed good levels of respect for each other's point of view.

**Commentary: Modern languages – French**

150. One Year 12 lesson in French was sampled. Teaching and learning were good, but students' achievement was unsatisfactory and standards of attainment well below average. The teacher was working hard to help students progress beyond a basic standard in the language. There were high expectations, but standards were low and no student was secure of a pass grade. Nevertheless, students were working hard to improve and showed very good motivation.

**Commentary: General studies**

151. One Year 13 lesson in general studies was sampled. Teaching, learning and students' achievement were good. Standards were above average. This was a very good lesson because the teacher's approach enabled an open, honest debate and discussion on difficult moral and social issues. All students in the small group were actively involved and this played an important part in the development of their independent learning skills and personal development.

## **PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS**

*Inspection judgement*

*Sixth form  
grade*

*School  
grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is		4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	4
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	4

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	3	3

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>4</b>
Attendance	5	3
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		4
Accommodation and resources	4	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	5	5
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	5	4

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>4</b>
The governance of the school	3	5
The leadership of the headteacher		4
The leadership of other key staff	4	4
The effectiveness of management	4	4

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*